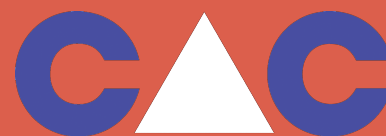# Msuri Chamecha

Chagga
Celebratory Ngoma

**Cultural Arts Centre**
Tumaini University Makumira

## Cultural Insights:

*In Tanzania, it is difficult to separate the idea of song, dance, and rhythm. This is why in Swahili the word* **ngoma** *means all three concepts combined.*

*In Chagga culture (and in many other cultures as well), there are several categories of music/dance. This song is an example of a celebratory song/dance. This is performed at celebrations and even in everyday life.*

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## Musical Concepts:

**Call and Response**: In many musical traditions in Tanzania, the call and response format is widely used. The Chagga are no exception. Introduce this concept with different exercises such as speaking in turn, or telling a story with a common refrain sung/spoken by the listeners. Ask for examples of how call and response is used in everyday life through speech, listening, etc.

**Variations:** Another aspect of many Chagga songs is that the leading part is often varied depending on the singer and the mood. This is often done without much conscious thought, and when duplicating this effect, it should be done in a carefree, easy way. Practice this with a group by providing a simple melody with lyrics and asking individuals or small groups to come up with possible variations. Ask them to change one note, a few notes, the rhythm, the words, etc.

This is especially applicable in the solo voice notation. Each call may be taken as an individual variation, and the player is free to mix and match the order of the patterns, or even create new ones. The patterns notated are a few standard variations.

**Keeping Rhythm with the Body:** In many Chagga traditional songs, a dance is performed along with the song. This utilizes the ankle bells (*njuga*) and helps keep everyone in the same rhythm and tempo. In this song, the performers typically alternate walking on the crotchet beat in a circle and then facing inwards and bouncing in place, again on the crotchet beat. The alternation between the two styles is not set, but instead the group will follow whenever one individual decides to change. Practice this by telling the group to walk in a circle but to watch and change their motion as soon as anyone moves to a different movement (jumping, sitting, hopping, etc.). Usually the leader of the song will cue the change in dance style, but anyone can take this role as long as they are clear about it.

# Msuri Chamecha

Trad. Chagga
Transcribed by Megan Stubbs

♩ = 70

oh msu - ri cha - me - cha ___ ko - tsi - a sau

Oh msu - ri cha - me - cha ___ kot - si - a

Hand Drum

Jingle Bells

Conch Shell

kot-si-a sau msu-ri oh-koo ul yaa kot-si-a sau kot-si-nda ku-la-si-sa

sau oh msu-ri cha-me-cha ___ kot-si-a sau cha-me-cha ___ kot-si-a sau

HD

JB

Shell

The entire song can be repeated as many times as desired.
The solo part can be variated with different melodic phrases, or the notated melodic patterns
can be used interchangeably.
The horn (*pembe*) part can also use different rhythms, each individual pattern can be taken as a variation,
the player can mix and match and create his/her own as desired.

This transcription is based on a performance by the Mtingo Group on the 25th of February, 2016.

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## Links:

A traditional Chagga group with the Chagga drums (*mtingo*)



An example of ankle bells (*njuga*)

# Translations (Poetic)

## Swahili:

Kiongozi:  Mheshimiwa pole, usikae kimya

Wote: Mheshimiwa pole, usikae kimya

K:  Mheshimiwa wangu/yule

K:  Pole usikae kimya

K: Ukishinda kutwa nzima

W: Pole usikae kimya

## English:

Call:  Honerable one, *pole*, don't be silent

Response: Honerable one, *pole*, don't be silent

C: My/That honorable one

R: *Pole\**, don't be silent

C: If/when you spend the whole day at our home

R: *Pole\**, don't be silent

\* The word *Pole* is a commonly used Swahili word that expresses sympathy. It can be used in a variety of settings, ranging from sneezing to funerals.

## Credits:

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Aliko Mwakanjuki & Gabriel Olodi

**Backround research:**
Gabriel Olodi & Mercy Kimaro

**Transcriptions:**
Megan Stubbs

**Translations:** Megan Stubbs and Mercy Kimaro

**Curriculum design/formatting:**
Megan Stubbs

# Pronunciation

The language of the Chagga (*Kichagga*) is pronounced phonetically, the same as Swahili or Latin. See guide below for English pronounciation:

A – Father

I – Bee

U – Loop

E – Egg

O – Door (not closed as in low)

Y – dipthong 'y' as in yield

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